

August 6, 2002

Public Notice for 401 Water Quality Certification

**Granite Construction Company
Johnson, Blue Lake and Emmerson Bar Gravel Extraction**

Humboldt County

On August 2, 2002, the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Water Board) received an application from the Granite Construction Company requesting Federal Clean Water Act, Section 401 Water Quality Certification and California Code of Regulations Water Quality Certification for the Johnson, Blue Lake and Emmerson Bar Gravel Extraction Project located in Humboldt County. The proposed project causes disturbances to the waters of the United States associated with the Mad River located in the Mad River Hydrologic Unit No. 109.00.

The proposed project sites are located on the Mad River near the City of Blue Lake, California. The Blue Lake Bar is located in portions of Sections 19 and 30, Township 6 North, Range 2 East, and portions of Sections 24 and 25, Township 6 North, Range 1 East, H.B. & M. The Emmerson Bar is located within Section 30, Township 6 North, Range 2 East, H.B. & M. The Johnson Bar is located in portions of Sections 19 and 30, Township 6 North, Range 2 East, and portions of Sections 24 and 25, Township 6 North, Range 1 East, H.B. & M.

The historic operations involve the annual extraction of up to 130,000 cubic yards of flood washed aggregate from the exposed bars of the Mad River (up to 50,000 cubic yards each from Emmerson and Blue Lake and up to 30,000 cubic yards from Johnson) and construction of summer low flow channel crossings of the Mad River as needed. Extraction operations at the Johnson, Blue Lake and Emmerson gravel bars have been continuous and ongoing since the early 1960's.

Excavation at the three gravel bars is typically conducted with scrapers. The rubber-tired vehicles are driven through the area of extraction and excavate up to six inches of river-run aggregate each pass. The scrapers remove approximately 15 to 17 cubic yards of aggregate per trip. Watering of the haul roads is conducted as needed during the dry periods to control fugitive dust.

When the operator has removed the aggregate to the approved extraction design lines and grades, the extraction area is smoothed leaving no depressions or berms that may potentially trap fish or cause impacts to surrounding habitats. The operator's river consultant will conduct a site visit at the conclusion of extraction operations and provide any additional recommendations reflecting seasonal extraction plan and reclamation plan conformity. When the final surfaces of the site are graded/seasonally reclaimed, the operator may remove the summer crossings and leave the bankfull channel area to the natural reclamation process, which occurs during the high flow events of the proceeding winter. The extraction season typically ends on October 15, unless involved agencies grant an extension of the season.

Granite Construction Company will implement mitigation and impact avoidance measures during the gravel extraction processes. These measures include limiting the number of haul roads providing access to the channel extraction areas and minimizing the need for temporary stream crossings when practicable.

The Army Corps of Engineers issued a Letter of Permission Process (LOP) for Gravel Extraction Activities in 1996, and it is currently being updated as LOP 2002-1.

The California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG), as the lead agency, is reviewing the project for California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) compliance.

Staff is proposing to regulate this project pursuant to Section 401 of the Clean Water Act (33 USC 1341) and Title 23, California Code of Regulations, Sections 3830-3869. Comments on this project should be submitted to Roy O'Connor at oonr@rb1.swrcb.ca.gov, within 21 days of the posting of this notice.